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Innovations in Managing Western Water: New Approaches for Balancing Environmental, Social and Economic Outcomes (Martz Summer Conference, June 11-12)

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SLIDES: GWC Review Report

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GWC Review Report

Larry MacDonnell

June 11, 2015

Our situation

- Cont'd rapid population growth, esp. in S. Platte, but also in other parts of state
- Concern about dry up of irrigated ag
- Interest in but concern about more TMDs
- Concern about protecting watershed health
- Concern about the managing changes resulting from global warming

The California example

- Not a future we want in Colorado
- We need to take charge now
- A unique opportunity

Basin roundtables and water plan

- ◉ Wake up call from drought of 2002-2003 and 15 year drought in the Colorado River basin
- ◉ Prompted a prolonged examination of where we are and what we want
- ◉ But the draft plan lacks means of implementation

Limits of process

- Broad, inclusive, consensus-based
- Designed to produce information, improve understanding, develop ideas—not to produce specific outcomes
- State plan but state itself has only limited ability to implement it; uses of water ultimately determined by hundreds of holders of water rights

Our challenge

- How to most effectively meet demands for new consumptive uses of water?
- How to achieve improvements in watershed health?
- How to manage the effects of climate change?

What to do? Option #1

Nothing, and hope

- Many of the key interests actively involved in process; hope they will try to follow the general thinking outlined in the plan
- (consider conservation; resist permanent acquisition of ag rights; build planned projects; use existing tools for watershed protection; hope the West Slope finally sees the need for more TMDs; monitor climate and hydrology)



What to do? – Option#2

*Strengthen the plan and
use existing agency authorities*

1. the final plan could lay out express **policies** to guide future water development and use actions

- conservation
- ag transfers
- new projects
- TMDs
- watershed health
- climate change

What to do – 2 (contd)

2. Plan could identify all relevant state agency authorities (in addition to CWCB) and direct uses of those authorities in manner consistent with plan policies

- E.g., future funding decisions by CWCB, CWPA, DOLA, CDPHE, etc.



What to do – 2 (contd)

3. screen proposed actions for inclusion in basin plans

- Apply criteria based on policies to proposals
- Inclusion in basin plan demonstrates widespread support, makes the project eligible for state funding, and gains govt'l support in federal permitting processes

What to do – Option#3

Legislative implementation

Perhaps consider a revision of the Colorado Water for the 21st Century Act

- ◉ Lay out policies (as above)
- ◉ Establish a process ensuring that the water demands associated with new development meet conservation requirements
- ◉ Authorize a permanent, streamlined process for ATMs to promote their use (see our proposal)
- ◉ Institute watershed planning for watershed health and water management (climate change)
- ◉ Increase funding for approved projects
- ◉ Reorganize roundtables and IBCC for this implementation phase

Unique opportunity

- 10 years of hard work
- Broad awareness of the array of needs and improved understanding of our mutual interests
- Pressures of continued growth and changes associated with climate change
- Let's avoid a future of mandated reductions and squabbling over who's to blame